

# The Early Adventures *of* Peacham Grew

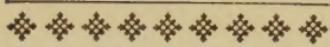
By ROY HELTON

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*The Early  
Adventures  
of  
Peacham Grew*



BY ROY HELTON



*Jimmy Sharswood*

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THE EARLY ADVENTURES  
OF PEACHAM GREW

BY  
ROY HELTON

WITH DRAWINGS  
BY  
EDWARD SHENTON

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*The Early Adventures  
of Peacham Grew*

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MADE IN THE U.S.A

*To*  
*My Father*



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## *LIST OF FULL PAGE DRAWINGS*

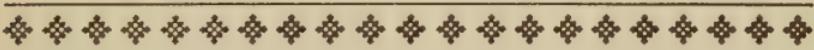
	PAGE
I saw a dark shadow about as tall as I am standing against the window . . . . .	27
God had magicked my father away . . . . .	45
I carried it out and tiptoed downstairs . . . . .	67
The arm hung down limp and squeaked when I walked . . . . .	73
I heard a low voice come out of the shadows . . . .	105



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*PART ONE*





## *THE EARLY ADVENTURES OF PEACHAM GREW*

**A**RE stars gold nails, I wonder, or long pointy diamonds that hold up the sky? God lives up there on top of the rain, and when it doesn't rain the lid is blue like plush up there and dark blue at night. God sits there. He has white clouds to lay things on.

One night we came home late from Uncle Givin's and a lot of stars fell down. It made me afraid when all those gold nails fell out, but in the morning I looked in the back yard and never found one. There was a hop toad there though, that I never saw before, and he and I got to be friends. Our ceiling fell down too, one time, in the bed room after a rain, and you could see way up into the attic where there was some yellow stuff like hair hanging down from the beams, called flax.

My mother is pretty like an angel. She has a gold necklace with Father's picture in. When I get sick, or sometimes in the morning when it is cold, she lets me sit up in bed and wear the necklace,

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES



and I can be a king with jewelry on. She brings me oatmeal that sticks in my teeth while I am still in bed.

My mother does her own work because she is very strong.

My father coughs because he has a catch in his throat, but my mother never coughs. I have a friend named Margry. My name is Peacham Grew.

I learned to read and write when I was young, but I have never gone to school. I read sometimes all day different books, but I like Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp best of all. Then in the evening my father talks to me after he lights his pipe and maybe tells me stories he makes up out of his head.

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

Now one night it was thunder and lightning, and a big storm with wind that broke down trees. I woke up. My, but it was dark and queer in my room. I was afraid, but I held still because I wanted to let Mother and Father sleep and not be scared by the terrible storm.

At first the lightning and thunder were very far away and didn't match each other. The sky would all brighten and my room would come light in funny places where it was always dark before. All the edges of things would be very bright, and all the sides of things very dark. Then the light would go out, but it would stay in my eyes a long time after, and the shelves or the bureau, which ever I was looking at last, would float up to the ceiling and move around there, wherever I looked. Only, the light parts would be purple and blue and the dark places on it would turn red. Then thunder would come and growl like my stomach does after I eat donuts, or like Uncle Givin's dog, when he puts his nose under the fence while tramps go by on the road.

This kept up for a long time. At last I got out of bed and looked through the window, and the next time it lightninged I saw way over the houses and the locust trees in our back yard, a great big palace

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES



built up on three hills. The palace was gold and silver and the hills were gold and silver under it, and the lightning ran over the hills like roads of fire. It seemed like silver things dancing on the top of the hills up to the palace door.

Then the lightning went out, but for a second more the palace turned as red as blood, and then it went out too and I never saw it again, but the wind blew out of the palace into my window. It blew

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

up my nightgown to my waist and slammed the door. The lightning came out of another part of the sky, and I saw the locust trees bending down in front of the wind,—bending down to my window. I thought, I am the King of the Wind and these locust trees are my slaves. And then I saw that the locust trees were bent way over and trembling, and that they were twisting and making a terrible noise as if the wind hurt them.

At last one tree yelled out very loud and fell down flat on the earth. I was sorry and afraid and jumped into my bed.

My father came into the room and looked at me. I wanted to cry and to jump up and go in between him and mother. But I thought, I am the King of the Wind, and I have a palace on three hills made of silver and gold. So I kept my eyes shut and my father went away again. And the wind died down, and the lightning came close and caught up to the thunder. Sometimes you could hear the sky split open and come together again, and sometimes it was a noise like they make in a drygoods store tearing off a yard of calico, only a million times louder.

I was afraid and sat up in bed.

Then the lightning shined again. I was looking up at the shelves when the light came. It shone

## *THE EARLY ADVENTURES*

into a corner there, that is always dark in the day time, and I saw something like a square black hole and way back deep in the hole a pale thing like a package, and the thunder was very loud and seemed to shake the house. Then mother came with her hair all running down over her head and carried me in to sleep with her and father in their bed. Even in there I could see the shelves and the dark hole and in the hole the pale thing like a package, but it was only in my eyes I saw it then, and the package was black and the hole light like a window. They floated on the ceiling a long time until I went off to sleep.

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

**W**HEN I woke up the whole world was bright and clear. A long square block of sunbeam was propped against the window, and I could smell the sweet juice of the locust tree that had fallen down outside.

After breakfast I went up to my own room and looked out to where the gold and silver palace had been. But the sky was empty blue over top the houses, and all between the houses and me were trees fallen down or with branches torn off, and some still bent down, all pointed straight from where the palace had been into my window. And when I saw that I was afraid.

Up here the smell of the juice of the trees was very strong and sweet, and the smell came into my room. I sat on my bed again and looked up over the shelves into the dark corner, but I couldn't see anything there. I took my chair over to the shelves and put two pillows on it and climbed up so my head came over the top. From the top shelf to the ceiling it was maybe three feet high, and the shelf was as wide as a cot bed.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

I scrumalged up and crept over to where the hole had been, but the wall was just the same there as everywhere. Then I thought, I must have dreamed about that black hole, and I was making to get down again when I leaned my hand against the wall to turn round. Then the wall gave in and a little square door came open right by my side and there was a little lop-sided room there that a queer smell came out of, and on the floor, sure enough was a bundle all wrapped up with rope around it and covered over thick with dust. I reached in and punched a hole through it with my hand and felt something hard inside. Then I heard Mother coming up stairs, so I climbed down from the chair and put the pillows back on the bed. Mother came in. She had her squeaky corset on that squeeks every time she takes in a breath. She made me go outside into the yard to play. I hunted up my toad frog and he and I played for a while.

I said, "Where were you last night when all that wind blew?"

And the toad frog said, "I crawled down into a hole where a rabbit lives with two red eyes."

"In our yard?" I asked him.

"Right here," said the toad frog, "Only he's a night rabbit which you'd never see except after dark.

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

He lives in a hole and all the roots of the weeds come down into his bed room. Well last night the wind was pulling up the weeds and they were crying, because they wanted to stay down in the ground. So the rabbit and I took hold of the roots of the weeds in our mouths, all we could and held them down until the wind was over. Then he and I went up to look around, and the trees and branches were lying all over the ground.

“We looked up at your window and saw you standing there. The red eyed rabbit whispered in my ear, ‘Who is that? Is it an angle?’

“But I said, ‘No. That is my friend who comes out to play with me in the morning when the sun shines.’

“The rabbit held his face close to my face so that his whiskers tickled my ear, and whispered, ‘That boy is the King of the Wind! Aren’t you afraid to play with him?’

“And I answered, ‘No. For he is my friend.’”

“And so I am too.” I told him. “Let’s play something today.”

But he said, “I wisht I could, but the red eyed rabbit has asked me down to dinner, and I guess he’s waiting for me now.”

Then the toad frog said, good bye, and hopped

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

away into a hole underneath the broken locust tree. I put my face down to the hole and listened to them eating their dinner until an ant crawled into my ear and I had to get up to shake him out. Then Mother called me in for lunch.

We had bread and butter and syrup and silver sardines and ginger snaps. When you pour the syrup on your plate it comes out in a little wiggly stream and you can make writing all over the plate. And ginger snaps are good soaked into milk,—soft and crackly too, and crumble up in your mouth.

I hate to eat sardines though, which is solid food, for sardines have feelings like you and me. But they are dead now, and the can is their grave.

Mother said, "Go up and take your nap. You didn't get much sleep last night."

I went up into my room and lay down on my bed, but pretty soon I had to roll over, for the bed was humpity like the top of a hill, wherever I lay, and every place I rolled it got humpity there too. I wondered what was the matter with my bed, for before then it was only humpity in the middle.

It seemed to me like somebody was crawling round and bumping me, under the bed.

So I said, "Come out from under there." I

*OF PEACHAM GREW*

spoke cross for I remembered I had been King of the Wind.

Then the bed humped down flat again and I was going to get up and look under it, but before I could get up I got tired and went off to sleep.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

WHEN I woke up there were fried onions in the room from down in the kitchen, and I knew supper was going to be ready pretty soon. So I got up and looked under the bed, but there was nothing,—only the little grey rolls of stuff like dust that are always getting born there, and always get swept away before they grow big enough to walk. For men are made of dust, only whiter, and mice are very little things and grey. Mice have to get born somewhere, and I wish mother would let them get born under my bed.

But there was nothing else under the bed; so I took the chair over to the corner and climbed up to the top shelf again, and crawled to the door and pulled the bundle a little bit fronter. It was heavy and lumpy, but the paper was very old and tore wherever I punched it with my hand. The dust smelled very old too, and went up my nose, but I tore the paper away and felt inside. There were some soft things like clothes, and some hard things like shoes, and a little thing that felt like a book. This came out; so I took it and climbed down again.

It was a very old book and the lid was loose. On

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

the front it said, " May blessings be upon the head of Cadmus, the Physicians, or whosoever it was that first invented books." And inside the lid was writing that said, " For days when you are very good." Under the writing it was all scrabbled over with lines like a baby would write, and there was a picture of a man and a lady, both painted red on their faces and blue all over their clothes, and a big letter B printed under the picture.

The stories in the book were scrabbled over, and all the pictures were painted with red faces and blue clothes that ran over the edges of the lines. All the same you could still read it. I took it over and sat on the edge of the bed where I read three stories before dinner time. It was a sad book, all about children with step mothers; there were giants too, and robbers that cut off a little girl's finger to steal her rings, and that part made my hand hurt.

Then Father called me to dinner. I put the book down on the floor under my bed and then looked at all my fingers and went down stairs, where Mother and Father were eating on our new red table cloth.

After dinner I went out for some air. We had a big back yard to that house with locust trees and weeds, and there were lots of different bugs in the ground, and worms, beside the toad frog and the

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

red eyed rabbit. I never saw that red eyed rabbit though. He was the frog's friend.

I walked all down the yard looking for the toad frog, but he wasn't anywhere around; so I lay down and smelled the grass for a while until Father called me in.

I jumped up then and started down the walk. Our house makes a face in the back, and my window is the right eye. I was still looking down on the ground for the toad frog, but it felt to me like the house's right eye was winking at me. I looked up.

For just the least bit of a second it seemed as if something was moving back of my window. I looked very hard then, but there was nothing to look at, only the dark window with the edge of my bed on one side. So I went in. Mother and I played dominoes while Father drew on a drawing board, but his cough was bad that evening and he had to stop drawing after a while.

Then I went up to get ready for bed. I don't remember feeling creepy at all when I went up stairs, but as soon as I opened my door I felt queer and creepy all over, and I remembered how something had humped up under the bed. I lighted the gas, but there was nothing in the room. My bed was just the same and my chair and books and

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

clothes. The books seemed a little pulled out, but I guessed I had left them that way.

Then I reached under the bed for that old story book I had found, and it wasn't there. That was creepy, all right. After a while when I put out the light I was afraid that the bed would get humpy again, but it didn't; so after a while I went off to sleep.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

I WOKE up early and heard a mouse running down the passage way to the garret stairs. But I lay in bed a long time, and when I got up Father was gone off to work. I had a soft boiled egg for breakfast, and Mother kissed me very hard when I came down.

Morning is for lessons, but it was Saturday and Mother had to go out to do her marketing. So I went down the front pavement and then up a back alley behind some gardens and knocked on the gate to see if Margry would come out to play. Margry is very rich and lives in an awful big house with four chimneys. But sometimes she plays with me.

This morning she came out after I had knocked for a while, and said, "Oh, is it you?"

I said, "Yes."

She said, "I'm awful busy today, getting ready for the party for my birthday, next Saturday. Aren't you specially raggity today?"

"This is my good suit," I said, "So I am not raggity at all."

"Oh!" she said, "I didn't notice the difference."

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

“Let’s play something.” I said, “Like you being the Princess of China and I being Alladin and the Wonderful Lamp.”

“I can’t today. We’re going to have ice cream and cake with sugar on. And I’ve got a new pink silk dress. You can’t come to the party, because it’s only for rich boys and girls with silk dresses and velvet suits.”

“My bed got humpy, yesterday.” I told her, “Like somebody was under it.”

“You must have a cheap mattress,” she said. “My bed is always as soft as fur on a pussy cat’s back. We’re going to have a band to play music out in the garden.”

“When?”

“At my birthday, Foolish,” she said, “Only you can’t come to hear it.”

“I wouldn’t want to,” I said, “Unless it was friends of mine.”

“You couldn’t, that’s why.”

“Don’t you want me to come?”

“Oh, if you had a pretty suit, I wouldn’t mind. But you can’t come, cause you’re not invited,” and she looked like she was glad I wasn’t.

Then I looked at her and I felt like blowing my nose; so I did it.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

She said, "Don't cry, Foolish."

"I wasn't going to cry. I wouldn't let any girl make me cry. But I feel bad, all the same, because you talk so mean." I said.

Then she wrinkled her eyebrows and said, "Did I talk mean?"

"You know you did."

She stood looking at me a long time, and then she said, "I'm sorry you're poor."

"Well I'm not."

"Well I am, cause I *do* like to play with you. The things you think up! Course they're awful silly, but all the same. Mother says, I mustn't play with you any more. She says the girls would all make fun if they knew. So I promised I wouldn't ever any more."

"Play with me?" I asked.

She bobbed her head up and down, and this time it looked to me like she was going to cry, but I purtended not to notice.

"Are you really sorry?" I said.

She bobbed her head again.

"Cause," she said, "When you play, it's all like real about Alladin and Alla Baba and the Magic Garden and the Fairy Castle, but when they play it's all just stupid like mud. Only," she said, "it

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

is nice when the boys all have pretty clothes, and now I've promised my mother. I wish you were rich too."

Then I was going to tell her that I had been King of Wind one night, but I heard their colored man calling her; so she said, "Good bye Peacham."

And I said, "Good bye Margry," and went out again by the back gate.

ALL that day I felt very lonesome because Mar-gy who was my only friend to play with that was a person, said that she could never play with me any more. I felt all empty inside as though besides the place where my dinner goes there was another whole barrel of empty inside of me that I never knew was there before. I drank four glasses of water, but it didn't fill me up any, for the empty was all around the water which felt very full, for Mother made me eat a big lunch and I daresen't tell about all the water. So I was awful full and awful empty all afternoon and sat in my bed reading about Alladin and the Lamp.

That night Father did tricks after supper and magicked away his penknife and his napkin and then his napkin ring, and made them all come out of his hair. I asked him how he did it, and he said, "Fern seed, Peacham, rubbed over the hands night and morning. That's an old receipe for making things invisible."

"Harry!" said Mother, "Don't fill the poor boy's head."

"As if it isn't filled already," answered Father, "Besides this is something he ought to know. Magic

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

is very important to boys in little houses, until their fathers can wash all the fern seed off their own hands."

"Does it make money go way too?" I asked.

"You see how well he understands me, Aggie?"

"I see," said Mother in a very low voice.

"Well he must learn the whole truth, my dear."

"What are you saying, Harry?" said my mother, very sharp and quick.

"The whole truth about fern seed," said Father. "How once you find it, for it is the seed of magic and enchantments and all the strange and wonderful things in the world, and once you get it just thoroughly into your pores and your blood, it will make everything disappear, houses and lands and penknives and silk dresses and gold watches and horses and carriages, and money."

"Even little boys, Father?" I asked him quickly.

"Even little boys sometimes," said my father, "even everything but one," and he stopped talking and looked over to my mother and smiled.

"But what, Father?" I asked, and Mother looked up from over by the sink and listened too.

"Everything, you two old dears," said my father, "everything but the one thing we've got that money won't buy."

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

Then Mother laid down her dish cloth and came over behind him and kissed him very softly on his ear and then went back to the sink again.

“Your cheeks are hot, dear,” she said after a little while. “Hadn’t you better go to bed?”

“First tell me some more about fern seed, Father,” I asked, “Where do you get it, and all about it please?”

“Why not,” said Father, “After all? When the moon shines on the fern leaves, wherever they grow, and there are white clouds here and there in the sky,—clouds that look like faces of ladies or like hills and castles in the air, or like old men with big noses, then one begins to pick the fern seeds that are hidden away in little lines under the leaves.

“But there must be always stars shining too among the clouds.

“Then one eats the fern seeds, and rubs them into his hands and over his eyes and heart. That is big magic for taking away money and lands and houses and silk dresses, and filling you up instead with dreams.”

“And makes things invisible?” I asked.

“Only real things, Peacham,” said Father, “All the other things, you just then begin to see.”

“I’m going to try it sometime,” I said.

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

“I think you inherit it anyway,” said my mother, “For this old fern seed is in your father’s blood.”

“I want to be just like him,” I said, “And if he has it I want to have it too.”

“Even to be poor?”

“Course. So long as Mother’s with us, what do we care about that?”

Then they both kissed me and made me go up to bed.

All day long I thought about the magic secrets that Father had told me. There was something even about that that made me feel sad and lonely. Seemed like Father was sad inside when he talked, and Mother too. I wanted Mother and him to be rich and have everything, even if they didn’t want it.

Mother took me to the grocery store where they have a little chopper like a swing for chip beef, and the man let me work it. But I felt bad even then, and when we came back I went up to my room and climbed up on the top shelf to see what else was in the bundle inside that little door. Somebody must have gotten in the house while we were out, for part of the paper was up there on the shelf, but all the insides of the bundle were taken away and

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES



the little door had slammed shut so I couldn't open it.

I did some lessons mother gave me and I read awhile and then went out and lay down on the grass thinking and thinking. I never felt so lonesome before.

That night Mother and Father went out for a walk around the square and left me alone out in our yard. The moon was up with white clouds under it. I went over into the corner where some

## OF PEACHAM GREW

young ferns were and scraped the fern seed off the back of the leaves and ate it. It was bitter and green, but I swallowed it down, and then I was afraid that Mother and Father wouldn't see me when they came home. They did though.

So I asked Father, "Does fern seed make you magic all the time or only just when you want to be?"

"When you get it in your bones you have to be magic all the time," said Father, "Whether you want it or not."

Mother said, "Did ever any boy have such a bringing up as this? People would think we were crazy to hear you and him talking this way."

"Well, maybe we are," said Father, "And maybe we're glad to be. You too."

"I shouldn't want either of you any different by one hair," Mother told him, and then they both smiled.

Then bed time came and when I was going up stairs Mother said, "Come down here a minute. Aren't your shoes damp from out in the yard?"

"Not hardly any, Mumsie," I said.

"Well take them off and leave them down here by the kitchen stove," she answered.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

I took them off and then started up again.

"Walk on the carpet, dear," Mother said, "and keep your feet off the bare floor."

I walked up stairs on the carpet, hardly making a sound, as though I wasn't anybody at all, but just Nothing going upstairs to bed. I came along the hall to my door. The door was open on a crack, but not wide enough to get in unless I could turn myself into smoke like a geni.

I had to push open the door and it squeeked on its hinges. Then I heard something moving inside my room, something big, and I was too afraid to run or make any noise. I turned my head very slowly for fear my neck might squeek too and looked over to the window. There was still a little light coming in through the curtains, and I saw a dark shadow about as tall as I am, standing against the window. It looked like my own shadow, but it was moving away from the bookcase and stooping down toward my bed. I was so scared then that my stomach turned over and made a noise like the water in a can of corn. And then I remembered that I had been the King of the Wind.

I said, "Who's there? What you want to scare me this way for? Are you a burglar?"

And then something answered out of my room

*OF PEACHAM GREW*



I SAW A DARK SHADOW AS TALL AS I AM  
STANDING AGAINST THE WINDOW



## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

over by my bed, and it said, "I'm scared more than you are."

And I said, "You are not."

And it said, "I am." Its voice was very shaky like the noise a tea kettle makes when it rocks on the back of the stove.

"Uh!" I said, and little thousand leggers with cold feet ran around all over my back.

"Don't do that." It said, "Uh! You scare me to pieces." And it groaned.

"Do something." It said, "Don't just stand there. If you're going to sqwush me, sqwush me, but don't just stand there." Then I could hear its teeth chattering in its mouth.

"I can light a match," I said, "Only don't you jump at me and say Boo!"

"As if I'd dare," it said, and its voice was still so scared that I felt sorry for it and lit the match. But I was afraid it would blow out the match; so I quick turned on the gas and lit that too, and there in front of me was a little boy, a little littler than I am, a funny little boy with great big eyes and a very white face and long brown hair almost to his neck.

For a whole minute I looked at him and he looked at me.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

“Who are you?” I said, and his voice still shook when he answered me:

“My name is Borlacks.”

“My name is Peacham Grew.” I said.

He looked at me another long time. He seemed very thin and pitiful, and he looked at me as if he was scared I would do something bad. So I reached out my hand like men do, and then his whole face changed in a second and he reached out his hand too, but before his hand got over to mine, he pulled back and said:

“You won’t squeeze it too hard?”

I said, “Of course not.”

Then he took my hand and I took his. It was very thin and light and cold.

“Are you really a burglar boy, Borlacks?” I asked him.

“No.” He said, and his eyes began to blink and his mouth pulled down. “You won’t ever want to take hold of my hand any more. But I’m not any burglar, Peacham Grew. I’m — I’m just —” And then he sort of trembled all over and stopped speaking and looked fady-like into my eyes.

“Just what?” I said.

“I don’t know,” said Borlacks talking very slow. “I don’t know what I am. And I feel lost. And

## OF PEACHAM GREW

yet here it's home." After that, seemed like he waited for me to say something, but I was surprised and sort of a little bit afraid. Pretty soon I'd waited so long to say anything that I couldn't begin. All this time he stood there with his head hung down.

"Oh, Peacham Grew," he said, very softly, so that I had to bend my head over to listen, "Please be good to me. Don't make me go back."

Then I felt cruel for keeping still so long. I went over and put my arm around his neck. "I like you, Borlacks," I said, "Oh, but you are cold!"

He nodded his head, but then he looked up and smiled, and his face came very beautiful like Margry's face, only very thin and pale.

"Why were you so scared of me when I came in? I was the one ought to have been scared of you." I told him.

"Oh no." He said. "I was the one to be scared. Why should a real person be scared of me? I'm the one that has to look out and hide away. For I never eat anything; so how could I hurt people? Supposing that it was anyone but you that found me. There wouldn't be any me left in a minute after that. I just know it."

And then as he was talking, I heard my mother and father come tramping up the passage way, and

## *THE EARLY ADVENTURES*

Borlacks with his poor little face all scared and his eyes came very wide, turned away from me and fell down on his knees and crawled under the bed.

“Aren’t you undressed yet?” said Mother.

I don’t think keeping a secret is the same as telling a lie. Anyhow I did it.

“No.” I said, “but I will in a minute.”

“Good night, old dreamer!” said Mother.

She reached down to me and kissed me on the forid. Then she went out and closed the door. I looked at under the bed and said, “Come out, Borlacks.”

But Borlacks said, “No.”

I got undressed and put all my clothes on the back of the chair, and put on my nightgown.

Then I said, “Come out, Borlacks.”

But Borlacks still said, “No.”

Then I looked at the gas light for a long time, and I was afraid. But I remembered how crumpley it is under my bed, and how I liked Borlacks, and how sorry I got when I looked at him. So I went over and turned out the light.

“Come out, Borlacks.” I said, and it was my voice that was all shaky like the tea kettle’s this time.

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

“Will you be good to me?”

“Why wouldn’t I?”

I heard him slipping out from under the bed.

“I hate dark.” He said, “In houses this way. It makes me scared.”

“I thought maybe you’d like the dark, people like you.”

“I don’t know.” Said Borlacks. “I never saw anybody else like me. It’s cold in the dark. Every night for three days it’s been so cold. I can’t see you now, and I feel all alone. Could I just touch your hand?”

“Oh, but you are chilly!” I said.

His thin hand held on to my hand, and it trembled as if he was shivering with the cold.

“That feels warm and good, Peacham.”

“Come closer,” I said, “I’m not afraid any more.”

He came closer, and I pulled his hand a little so that he had to sit down on the bed. Then I put out my other arm and stretched it around him and drew his face down beside me.

“I’m so lonesome,” I said, “Borlacks.”

“You are?”

“Oh yes, all the time now.” I told him.

He snuggled up close beside me, and I pulled

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

the covers up over us both. For a long time he lay there and never spoke a word. I thought he had gone to sleep, but at last he said:

“This must be like Heaven, Peacham Grew. All warm and friendly this way, with company like you. I’ve never been so happy in the world.”

“Heaven?” I said, “You know all about Heaven, don’t you?”

“I heard about it. A long time ago, before,— before I got to be this way I was took to church every Sunday where a man talked about Heaven. But I never got there.”

“Oh!” I said, and I got afraid all over again. “But where did you get to, Borlacks? You never had to go to—to the Bad Place, did you?”

“I never even got there either,” he said.

“But Borlacks,—haven’t you got to go to one or the other? It’s in the Bible.”

“Maybe it is,” he said, “But it never happened to me,—not yet. All I know is, I was sick, and I went to sleep one night with my head hurting, oh so bad. And Schaffer, which was my nurse’s name, said for me to stop all that whining, and that I was all right but only whining to keep her awake, for spite. I felt like I was swinging in a swing. It swung up and up, and then down and down, and at

## OF PEACHAM GREW

last it went up and up and all the way over, and around and around and around.

“After while it stopped swinging and I was alone. I reached out and it was all thick around me and smelled like clothes. Then it seemed I was like I was in a little world, and the ground crinkled, ever so little when I touched it, like paper. I crawled around and there was soft grass to lie on in one place, and little valleys and hills, and another place was hard like a great mountain of rock with stairs cut in it. I climbed up the stairs, but on the top it went over into nothing, so I got afraid and climbed down. There were two mountains with a deep valley in between, and the rocks smelled like something bitter and old. And the whole world was dark.

“I slept a long time. I woke up and crawled around again, and it was bitter cold. And by then I knew there was something wrong, because I never wanted anything to eat any more, and that made me afraid. I crept down into a deep valley where I hid in the grass and went to sleep again.

“I woke. There was a noise. The light came in, and a big hand came in and pulled and went away. Then I saw that the mountains were two of my best shoes, and the grass was a coat, and the world was a bundle of paper. I crawled out and stood up. I

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES



stood up very tall, and the clothes in the paper were my own clothes. I went out through a little door, and I was home.

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

“Then some one came. I hid under the bed. He talked bad to me. Then he went off to sleep and I climbed up again and hid. Dark came. I stole out and put on my clothes. Then I went down into the house, and all was the same only the things, but my nurse was gone and my guardian, and there was another lady and man sleeping here, and in my room another boy which was you. I was so lonely, so long,” Borlacks said, “But I am so happy now.”

“You never got to Heaven then.”

“You see,” he said, “I guess somebody besides God has got to love you in Heaven or the Bad Place to get you in. I guess you got to get introduced by somebody, and there ain’t anybody to introduce me. Somebody’s got to love you.”

“Your father and mother, how about that?”

“They never loved me. I don’t think they ever saw me. I never saw neither of them to remember. They went away after I was born, like to forget I ever lived. That’s why I had Schaffer and a guardian that was her husband. That’s all ever lived here. And I didn’t like them. Nobody is there that wants me.”

“There must be somebody, Borlacks,” I said, for I knew he was crying now, though he never made a sound.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

“There was an old man I used to buy apples off of. I’d a thought maybe he’d do it. But he never.”

“But now you got me to love you,” I said, “And wherever I go I’ll get you in.”

Then he hugged me very tight and stopped crying. His hands were warm now, and pretty soon I heard him go to sleep. I thought and thought and thought, and that put me to sleep too. When I woke up it was morning and Borlacks was gone.

I crawled up on the top of the shelves to where the little door was. I tried it and it was latched on the inside. I knocked on it but Borlacks never answered. Only I could hear a soft patter like a mice’s feet running across the boards.

*OF PEACHAM GREW*

NEXT night when I had got into bed, Borlacks came again. I heard the little door unrattle and then I heard him come climbing down the shelves.

I called him and he said, "Yes Peacham." So I was not ascared. His hands were cold, but not so awful cold, and that night he made a picture come on the wall. He asked me all I'd done that day, and all I used to do. So I told him about the toad frog and about Margry and all our family.

He said I told it like a story in a book and I ought to write it down for people to read. He said if ever he was to grow up, he was going to write stories too for folks like him to read, "If ever I find out where any other ones are," he said. He cried a little, but I petted him and he got all right again.

Then he made up a story about three old men that put salt on the tail of the rainbow and caught the rainbow which is a big bird that sometimes lit on the earth to drink fresh water after the rain, but all the other times flew around the sky and followed the sun, and the sunsets were the light shining on its feathers. Everytime it lit, it laid a golden egg. But it laid two kinds of gold eggs, Borlacks said, one kind when it was free and one kind when it was tied

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

up, a heavier kind. But the old men didn't know this. They made the bird lay an egg before they would let it free.

Then they took up the egg and tried to carry it away, but the gold was so heavy that it crushed them down through the earth and buried them forever. Then the rainbow flew off and never comes back now but only rests just the ends of her feathers on the ground, for fear of people, while before she had laid the golden egg to pay people for letting her drink the rain, and whenever her gold eggs had hatched they were full of all kinds of new flowers. And now there aren't any new flowers any more, but only the ones she brought long ago.

But the heavy gold egg she laid for the old men stayed a long time in the ground and the flowers all turned to stone which is where all the diamonds and precious stones all come from that are dug out of the ground.

Borlacks made it so real that I saw a picture on the ceiling, and next day I drew a picture of the three old men and it was still in my head so I could see it on the paper while I drew. I showed it to Borlacks with a match when he came next night, and he said it was exactly like in his head, except his three old men never had that kind of pants on.

## OF PEACHAM GREW

EVERY night I talked to Borlacks. We told stories and played adventures, but I never saw him by daytime, for then he was afraid and would hide away.

Then my father was taken sick and couldn't go to work any more. He coughed all night long, and I stayed awake and prayed for God to make him well. Borlacks prayed too, but he was afraid it wasn't any good. And one night he cried and I snuggled him up close to me until he cried himself asleep.

The next day, mother came in. She looked very pale. Her eyes were big and her hair plaited down her back like a girl's.

"Come into Father's room, Peacham." She said, and her voice whispered, "Come very softly."

"Can I take him a present?" I asked.

She just nodded her head and turned her face away from me. I took my picture I made of the three old men and carried it into his room. The room was almost dark and Father was asleep on the bed. There was a smell of medicine and some new glass things on the bureau.

Father's face looked smooth and young.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

Mother said, "You can sit down here dear, a little while. If he wakes you can talk a little, but he mustn't talk."

Then she went out and turned on the water in the bathroom, but I could hear her crying all the same.

I sat down and looked at Father. I loved him so that it filled up my neck. He looked like a little child. After while he woke up and opened his eyes.

"I'm here, Dad." I said.

"What ho!" he said, "That's nice. Why are they letting you in?"

"You mustn't talk." I answered, "But I can talk to you. I brought you a picture I made."

"Turn up the light."

"Can I?"

"Of course. I feel better today. I'll be up in no time."

I turned on the light and gave him my picture.

"It's a picture of something." I said.

"Out of a book, ha?" asked Father, "Why that's good. Awful good. Wherever did you see any picture like that?"

"It isn't from any picture, Dad. I just drew it."

He looked over at me.

"You never thought all that up."

## OF PEACHAM GREW



“You musn’t talk.” I said. “I didn’t exactly think it up. I—I just saw it.”

“Saw it?” asked Father, “Saw it?” And he lifted his head up off the pillow.

I wanted to tell him about Borlacks. I knew he’d never hurt Borlacks any. And he looked so white and young and sad too, now that the light was on. So I did tell him all the way to the end.

“Peacham,” he said, “You’ve been eating fern seed.”

I nodded my head.

“Go to it, old man!” he said “I wanted a boy like you.”

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

He smiled at me and held out his hand. I ran over to the bed and took his hand. I wanted to kiss him, but he shook his head, and only held very tight onto my hand for a long time.

Then he said, "Be a good boy, and help Mother all you can. Now run along. Remember. Help all you can."

"Good bye Dad," I said, "I will."

"Good bye, Peacham," he answered, "Someday we'll eat fern seed together." Then I kissed my hand to him and came out and tooed the door.

That night, in the middle of the night, Borlacks woke me up by whispering softly in my ear.

He said, "Listen! "

I listened until my breath hurt, and all the time Borlacks held tight to me, and his hands got colder and colder. Then his hand let go of my arm, and I could hear him breathe again.

"What was it, Borlacks?" I whispered.

"Something in the room. Something by the bed. Something that touched me and then touched you. Like a hand," he said, and his body shivered and he clutched up at me and pulled my head down under the spread.

OF PEACHAM GREW



GOD HAD MAGICKED MY FATHER AWAY



## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

We lay there and listened a long time.

“It’s gone,” said Borlacks. “It’s gone out through the window.”

Then all of a sudden the front door downstairs opened and my mother’s feet came running up the stairs. Somebody followed after her with thick shoes.

“Go to sleep!” said Borlacks. His hands came warm again and smoothed through my hair. I wondered why mother ran up the stairs that way and why she was up so late, but all the time Borlacks’ hands smoothed through my hair, and at last I went to sleep.

When I woke up it was very late, and little Aunt Cherry was standing by my bed. She bent over me when I opened my eyes and kissed me.

“Get dressed,” she said, “You are coming out in the country to stay with me a little while.”

She helped me dress and put some of my things into a telescope and then took me down the back stairs.

“Where’s Mother?” I asked her, for there was nobody in the kitchen. “I want to say good bye to Dad too.”

But she made me step up into the little buggy by

*THE ADVENTURES OF PEACHAM GREW*  
our back gate, and she put my telescope in behind,  
and then got up by me and said, "Git up! "

The old yellow horse gitted up along down the  
alley and into the street. He turned around to the  
right before Aunt Cherry could drive him the other  
way, even though she pulled hard on the reins and  
twisted his head. And then he began to gallop and  
ran down the street past our house.

Aunt Cherry started to talk to me and pointed  
down the street the way we were going, while she  
guided the reins, but I looked back to see our house.  
First I looked up at my window, and it looked like  
Borlacks standing up behind the curtain waving his  
hand. I waved back, but while I was waving I  
looked down and all my inside screwed up tight  
like a hard ball, for there was a terrible black thing  
on our door, and I knew then that God had magicked  
my father away.

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*PART TWO*





## *PART TWO*

ISN'T it queer in the country, how there's only grass for pavements and mud for streets? And the ground is queer too. All dirt underneath. In the city it's only dirt on your hands and face, but in the country where everything is dirt, your hands and face keep clean.

Aunt Cherry is pretty like my mother, only fatter, and has a mold on her cheek that goes up and down when she talks. She has sad eyes like mother. She makes cookies which she puts in a bucket. She huffs when she walks upstairs.

Uncle Givin is very tall and skinny, and there are little red lines all over his nose. He is very proud. He has a wooden arm and he pretends it is made of meat like his other arm especially when there are ladies for dinner. Once when he slipped down getting out of the wagon he broke his wooden arm and wouldn't go out of the house until Aunt Cherry took it to town to get it fixed. He wouldn't take it himself, but just stayed home and hid from the neighbors, so nobody would know in town he had only one arm.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

Sometimes he is very cranky to me, and sometimes he kisses me full of bristles. We have lots of butter and yellow milk that comes out of cows. It's good all the same. Cottage cheese looks like ice cream only warm and bitter. Pigs have fat babies like people have, but horse babies are thin like men.

At night Uncle never wears his wooden arm, or when he has overhauls on. Then sometimes I like him a hundred dollars. He cracks jokes and plays tricks just like a boy, but when he puts the wooden arm on it's all different. It sort of stiffens him up, and he talks solem and sticks out his stomach, specially with company and acts strict to me. I hate his wooden arm. Its hand is cold like china. It never is any good anyway. It drops things out.

But when ladies are for dinner, Uncle prutends like it is real; only one day the fork slipped out of its hand and the hand came down hard in the dish like a flat iron and the dish bust and spilled gravy all over. He cussed. Uncle talks different from us. He says hain't for ain't. His good hand and his forid and his bald head look brown like the crust of a pie. His whiskers are grey except when he shaves them off, and then they look white underneath like dough.

## OF PEACHAM GREW

There was a long time I lived in the country and nothing happened, only sad things. Mother went to work in the city for a secretary, and came out Saturday nights to be with me. I felt lonesome and sad all the time she was away, thinking I'd never see Father any more, nor Borlacks. There was no children to play with except the pigs. So I went out every day and wrote potry like this:

*When I am dead and passed away  
With pretty angles I will play  
Where Daddy is in the month of May.*

It was really July then, but May seemed better. I wrote that in two days. And I wrote another piece, but which took a week.

*The country is empty  
Said Johnie McFerson  
I can look for a mile  
And not see a person.*

*The country is dirt  
The city is bricks.  
What is trees in the country  
In the city is sticks.*

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

*The country is pretty  
Where everything grows.  
What's under the ground  
They's nobody knows.*

I never knew anybody named Johnnie McFerson.  
It was just a made up name.

Down the hill from our house is a place called a medder, all green and grassy and thick trees beyond. Aunt Cherry let me play in the medder, but I must never go in among the thick trees, for the woods go on for miles and miles, and little boys get lost that way. And there is poison ivory in the woods will make your face break out.

Well, in the medder, just before you get to the woods there is a maple tree all by itself, which is where I wrote my potry. All kinds of flowers grow around the tree, and I can lie down there and watch them grow. All kinds of flowers, but at first, mostly buttercups and clovers and dandilions.

One morning I woke up, and out of my window it looked like a star had broken up and fallen on the grass. I ran down barefooted and there was cool wet dew on the grass, and the pieces of a star were a million buttercups. Then after breakfast I went out and the dew was dry but the buttercups were

## OF PEACHAM GREW

still there. So I picked out one and lay down to look at it. It was a saucer of gold. I looked a long time, and seemed like it got big like a valley all gold, and in the middle of the valley was some green wood, and a lot of gold headed men that leaned over trying to get warm by the green wood fire, or maybe it was an altar and the men were worshiping. And every buttercup in the medder had a green altar and a ring of men bowing down to worship. So I tiptoed whenever I walked across the field for it was like a million gold churches out of doors, and it wasn't right to make any noise.

Then the clover came up. Just white clover. I thought it was a common flower and I ate some of it which tasted sweet and good. But one day I lay down and looked at the clover too, and I was sorry I had eaten any of it. For it was a little hill, and all around the hill were a thousand tiny white angles with their wings lifted up above their heads. The purple clover was the same, only the angles were bigger with purple wings. I listened, and sometimes it seemed like I could hear them singing, but the songs were very faint and far away. After I saw them I never walked across the field again, but always around by the path that leads under my maple tree.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES



It was a tall round maple tree, but the leaves only grew on the very outside edges all over. When I got down under it and the sun was shining it looked like I was in a cave deep under the sea with the green light of the sea over my head. Then the wind would blow and I could hear the waves high up on top of my cave and I would have to write some more poetry.

Whenever Mother came I brought her down under my maple tree, and we talked about old times when the milk came in bottles, and in the winter the milk would look out of the top of the bottle with a hat on her head like a little fat lady dressed in white. Sometimes Mother would cry and I petted

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

her till she smiled again. Her work is very easy in town, but Aunt Cherry says to come out and live in the country, and Uncle Givin says yes too, but Mother said no. For she was making money to get a little home again for her and me.

I think though, Mother would have come, only for this, that once every month Uncle Givin has a spell. He goes in town in the buggy and comes home drunk. It is on the first of every month when he goes in to bank with money from the milk, that he comes home drunk. We have twenty-six cows.

When he gets drunk he won't let me sit at the table. He says bad things to Aunt Cherry about having me there, and all day Aunt Cherry cries, but she cooks me butterscotches, and I eat out in the outside kitchen and hide when Uncle comes in.

Only he never hurts me, but he looks bad at me and Aunt Cherry and talks to himself. The reason is that he had a little girl that died about as old as I am. She got run over running out to say goodbye one day when he was going to take the milk money in to town. He had wanted to take her with him and then she wouldn't have got killed, but Aunt Cherry had said no because she had a cold.

One day Aunt Cherry was crying and I crept up in her lap and kissed her and asked her why, and

## *THE EARLY ADVENTURES*

then she told me about it. And that was why he drank liquor.

The next day after he gets drunk he is very good to me and he looks sorrowful at me and pats me when I go up to bed.

*OF PEACHAM GREW*

ALL through summer I lived with Uncle Givin and Aunt Cherry, and I got sunburnt and weighed sixty-five pounds. Mother laughed to see me when she came, my face was so fat and healthy. I had almost forgotten about Borlacks and all that time back in our old house, and the fern seeds and my Dad. Not exactly I hadn't forgotten, but it all seemed far away. For there was a farm hand moved in with a family. He had a boy named Reds just as old as me. It made me think of Margry sometimes, all the things we played together, not fancy things, but things like damning the creek up and making a water wheel, or catching beanbags and playing hiseby in the hay.

After he came I never wrote any potry any more. He was a red headed boy and his head was just as round as any ball, and his knees were low down on his legs, and he was always saying, "I know it," when ever anybody told him anything, whether he did know it or not. He came from Massachusetts. But he was a nice boy, only cruel to things like june-bugs and cats and grasshoppers. I liked him better than Margry, but he was ugly and only wore nothing

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

but big overhauls until it was September, and then he wore a shirt and draws underneath and had a pair of shoes.

Well, one night it was the end of September, and Aunt Cherry and I were sitting down in the kitchen. There was a fire of wood in the kitchen stove, for the nights were cool, though sometimes it was still as warm as summer all day long. The wood burning gave up a sweet smell like lead pencils. The lamp was lighted on the table and I had my book of the Arabian Nights to read for half an hour until bed time. Aunt Cherry's cheek looked like an apple where the lamplight scraped across it, and besides the smell like lead pencils there was the smell of spice and apples and grape juice all over the house, even in my clothes when I shook them, for Aunt Cherry had been preserving all week. For dinner we had had so much good milk and a whole cantelope apiece that I was sleepy even for the Arabian Nights, where the fisherman was talking to the geni in the bottle. It was hard to turn the pages over, I was so sleepy. The chair was like a boat floating fast along, but the strange thing was that I was floating way off, but all the time staying by the lamp and the table and Aunt Cherry's rosy

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

apple face. For a long time I had never been so happy as then.

“I’m so happy,” I said, “Aunt Cherry.”

She turned and smiled at me, and the mold on her cheek went up and down. Then from upstairs on the second floor there came a low sound. Scrape, scrape, scrape, went the sound, and then the boards creaked over our heads and the sound scraped on. Then something rattled once and the boards creaked again.

I was looking at Aunt Cherry’s face. It turned white all over. She laid down her sewing and looked up at the ceiling over her head. I knew all the time what it was, and I felt wide awake now, and sad all over again, for Uncle Givin was upstairs sharpening his razor to shave. It was the only time he shaved, just before he went in town to get drunk. All the other time he let his whiskers grow on his face, grey and bristly, and very sharp at first, but afterwards softer and bendy like a paint brush.

“Isn’t it bed time, Peacham dear?” my aunt asked, and she talked like some one had fastened something tight around her neck, and she didn’t look at me when she talked.

I purtended not to notice anything. I folded up my book and went upstairs to my room that was

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

made in the attic and petitioned off with laths. All week I had been getting happier all the time, and Aunt Cherry singing in the kitchen; and Mother was coming out in two days more and Uncle Givin awful nice and kind, and had promised never to get drunk any more, but send the money into town by mail.

Now tomorrow night I knew it would be all changed, cause he never shaved except for one thing. Aunt Cherry would be crying all day, and in the evening Uncle Givin falling around over things and me hiding away out of sight with Mother coming out just for one day when everything was to be so bad.

I couldn't get to sleep. After while when it was very still downstairs I got out of bed and went to the window to smell the air. I leaned out a long time. And pretty soon I heard something that wasn't the wind in the ivy vine nor anybody downstairs in the house. It was a soft far off noise like a piano playing on one finger down on the edge of the woods. I listened and listened and leaned way out of the window where the vine leaves come up and pat against your face. Then I heard somebody singing way off in the trees. I fell asleep leaning out of the window listening.

*OF PEACHAM GREW*

Then when I woke up there was a long pain across my stomach from the window sill, but somebody was still singing way off through the trees. I got up and went to bed.

THEN I went to sleep again, and while I slept I dreamed about the old times. I woke up. It was cool, just before morning. I could see the light out of my window, but in the room it was dark. Far off down at the barnyard the bantam rooster crowed, the young one whose voice was so squealy and queer and who was just beginning to learn how to crow and got up before all the others and went out alone to practice before sun rise.

Just for a minute I lay in my bed, snuggled up and warm. Then I remembered how Uncle Givin would get up soon and harness the mare to drive into town, and how bad things would be tonight for Aunt Cherry and me, with Mother coming and all the mean things she'd have to see. I got up and dressed, all but my shoes and tiptoed down the stairs. I crept along the hall. Uncle Givin's door was open. I could hear him breathing hard and slow. Everytime he breathed he said, "Who!"

I stopped to listen and looked in at his door. I could see a little ways inside, the white bed where the noise came from and a chair by the door. On the back of the chair was a shirt with the cuffs hang-

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

ing down like hands. There were shiny buttons in both cuffs so I knew for certain that Uncle was going into town. On the seat of the chair lay Uncle Givin's wooden arm with its hand reached out half closed.

I was scared when I saw the arm reaching out, for I hated it. It was so bad and cold, and helped Uncle Givin to drink liquor. I tiptoed on down the hall, and then I thought something. Suppose if Uncle never had any wooden arm today. How about that? Suppose I hid his arm away until tomorrow. Tomorrow was Sunday, and then he wouldn't go into town and be drunk. Not on the Lord's day, for it would have been a sin. And if he did on the next day after, Mother would be gone home again and it would be all right.

I tiptoed back. He was still asleep, saying "Who!" when he breathed, but I was afraid of the arm. A breeze came in through the window. It blew in my face and the hands of the shirt waved back and forth. Then Uncle turned over and stopped saying "Who!" So I didn't dare to move for a long time. He commenced to breathe slow again, and this time he said, "Whee!" when he breathed. I knew he would wake up soon, but still I was scared of the wooden arm. Then I remem-

## *THE ADVENTURES OF PEACHAM GREW*

bered about Mother coming and that made me creep into the room and pick up the arm.

It was smooth and icy cold. The cold went all over me, and it was heavy and hard to hold. I carried it out, and tiptoed downstairs. The steps squeaked. The fourth step from the bottom was loose and the board was sprung up. When I trepped on it, it made a terrible loud skreech, and upstairs I heard Uncle Givin's bed spring make a noise like a jews harp, and I knew he was getting up.

I stepped off the loose board and it skreeched again; so I ran down the rest of the stairs. I ran across the kitchen, but where the rag carpet goes in front of the stove there is a hole wore through. My foot caught in the hole and I flammed down on to the floor and the wooden arm struck the floor and made a terrible noise.

Then I heard Uncle Givin running down the hall to see what the matter was, and he called Aunt Cherry while he ran, and his voice was high and squawky; so I got scared worser even than before. I ran out into the outside kitchen, and I was still holding on to the arm. The outside door was open on a crack. I pushed against it and ran out. The grass was cold and wet on my bare feet and the dew splashed in front of me where I ran, with a



I CARRIED IT OUT AND TIPOED DOWNSTAIRS



## *THE ADVENTURES OF PEACHAM GREW*

noise like a lady's skirts. I kept close beside the house to the corner, and then went on down through the medder to my maple tree where I looked back.

Uncle Givin was out running around the house in his night shirt. His two bare legs were long and skinny. I never saw them before. Aunt Cherry was out at the back door in her night gown with curl papers all over her hair because Mother was coming, and Uncle Givin was yelling and calling. One arm of his night shirt was waving out back behind him while he ran. Pretty soon I saw Reds and the hired man come out of their house over to Uncle Givin. I was afraid to stay under my maple tree any longer. I crept back down the medder and went into the woods where it was still almost dark and all kinds of hard prickly things were under my feet.

It smelled old in the woods, and it was dark and gloomy there,—full of things. I stood still and held the arm, for the arm was warmer now and limper than when I first picked it up. It got lighter. The sky was pale purple first, and there were still two stars that looked down through the black trees. Then the sky got paler and paler, and the two stars got fainter and fainter and all of a sudden right up over my head a bird began to sing.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

“Where am I?” It said, “Oh! Oh! Oh!  
Where am I?”

I looked over at the stars and the stars were gone.

Then something coughed, right down by my feet, and another thing went off like an alarm clock that hasn’t any bell. I moved around so my back was against a big tree. When I looked up again the sky was pale yellow like lemonade, and some more birds began to sing all different songs through the woods. Once, far off I heard the first one sing again, the lost bird that said, “Oh! Oh! Oh! Where am I?” But after that I never heard it again.

All the time it got brighter, and the noises got louder. Now I could see all around me big grey trees and branches reaching down like they wanted to pick something up off the ground,—something they’d left there when they were young. There were old trees stooping over with humps on their backs, and little young trees reaching up instead of down. I looked up and the sky was light blue over my head, and on the top of the tall tree I leaned against, the leaves were gold, all twisting and twinkling in the sun.

Then I went to lay the wooden arm down, and I saw that two fingers had broken off the hand and

## OF PEACHAM GREW

the thumb was part split off too, and it was all limp in the elbow like it was dead. And I heard Uncle Givin in the medder, and he was calling and calling. His voice was hoarse and rough like a huksters that has been calling rasberries a long time. I crept over through the trees and peaked out.

“Peacham! ” he said, “Come home! Come home to breakfast! ” Then I saw him. He was all dressed up now, and had his new boots on, but his left sleeve hung down, and his face was all white where the whiskers were off and all sunburnt brown in the other places. He was close to my maple tree, looking all around like a bird, and his hand was behind his back.

“Peacham! ” he said, “Dear Peacham! Bring me back my arm.” Then he turned around and I saw that he had a little switch in his right hand.

After that he called some more and tramped all around through the grass. Pretty soon he began to say bad words, a whole lot at a time, but soft, like under his breath, and then he would stop saying them and call out again for me to come home. Every time he called it sounded nicer and every time he stopped he talked more bad words than ever, all new kinds and then called again.

Pretty soon he tramped down to the woods near

## *THE ADVENTURES OF PEACHAM GREW*

where I stood, and I scrooched down behind a big grey tree until he tramped back to the house. I sat down and waited a long time more, until I saw him come out of the house again with his overhauls on I knew by that that he had given up going in to the city. But he looked very angry.

I got hungry, and wanted to go back, but I was afraid now, for I had broken the wooden arm. Next thing Aunt Cherry and Reds came out of the house and walked down the medder to where my maple tree was. They were calling my name. But I was afraid to answer, and I was sure they'd find me. I crept back and picked up the arm and ran into the woods.



THE ARM HUNG DOWN LIMP AND SQUEAKED  
WHEN I WALKED



## THE ADVENTURES OF PEACHAM GREW

**I** RAN and ran. And then I walked and walked. Seemed like to me I could never dare to go back any more. Seemed like I'd have to stay away for always.

All the time the woods got thicker and thicker, and darker and darker, with hardly any blue sky shining through. Wherever there was a little bank, it was all over green with moss like tiny trees and flowers, and the ants were people trepping on the grass. In here though, hardly any birds would sing, and there was no noise scarcely but the wind way up stairs and my feet that scrunched on the leaves and dry branches, and the arm that hung down limp and squeaked when I walked. It was warm and broken, and I wasn't afraid of it any more, but I hated it all the same, and it was heavy in my hands.

All the deeper I got in the woods, and all the more it got still, all the more I hated for that bad arm to be there with me. At last when I went to take it in my other hand the elbow of it bent over and pinched my finger so it bled a drop of blood around the nail and the nail went white and hurt me. So I said to the darn old arm,

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES



“ I’m sick of you. I wisht you was dead. I won’t carry you another step. How do you like that? ”

The arm never said a word.

There was a little clear space among the trees where the sun shone down and tall thin grass grew. I laid the arm in the grass and the arm groaned and tried to bite me again. But it never said a word.

“ I’m going to leave you there,” I said, “ And you have to stay there for ever and ever, and never help Uncle Givin to drink liquor any more.”

The arm lay still like it had gone to sleep on the grass while I walked away. But as I went on through the trees, I heard something creeping along on the ground behind me. I turned quick around,

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

but there was nothing there. Then I walked on and heard it again, crawling over the leaves. I was afraid. I picked up a stick. Something rustled again. I tiptoed back to where I had left the arm. It was lying there on the grass pretending to be asleep. I touched it with the stick and it laughed at me. I didn't know what to do, for I was afraid to go on and have it crawling after me through the woods. I said to myself, "I'll bury the arm." Just then something laughed again a little squeaky laugh down in the grass by the arm. So I thought, if I bury it it will burrow out again and follow me on through the woods, or maybe crawl back to Uncle and tell him where I hide.

I felt in my pocket. I had four matches there which I carried upstairs to light the candle in my room. So I said to the arm, "I'm going to burn you up, and then you'll never follow me any more, or be wicked any more."

This time the arm never laughed.

I pushed a lot of dry wood about it and leaves which made a big pile, and lighted it with a match. Then the arm groaned and burnt up to ashes. All its badness burnt up and smelled like glue. I scraped a little hole to bury its iron bones in, and then went on through the woods.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

SEEMED like everything was different now. Seemed like everything began to smile at me and wanted to talk to me, that had been afraid before when I carried the arm. The sun came through the windows of the trees. I got hungry for breakfast, but still I went on, and pretty soon heard a noise like a lot of ladies talking after dinner, and the dishes rattling and the knives and forks. Then, what do you think? The ground went down a hill and at the bottom was a little river running over a load of white stones and talking to the stones to get out of the way. It was too wide to jump over, and looked deep both sides. I took a long drink and then followed the river as it slid down stairs over the stones.

The woods changed. All the old grey trees that never hardly stirred except way up on the roof were gone, and all these trees down the hill were new trees that brushed my face with their hands when I passed. Then the trees stopped altogether, and out in front of me was a little magic land full of flowers, — tall red flowers with fringes around their heads like Margry and the girls at her party, and at their feet were a thousand little green umbrellas,

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

like all the fairies in the world were having a meeting in the rain. Under some of the umbrellas were little yellow balls that smelled like pineapple. I was hungry and maybe the yellow apples were good to eat, but maybe they were magic apples for only fairies to eat when they met there at night in the rain.

I got up and went on, and at the end of the open place was a big bent tree full of red apples. I knew these were people's apples, though maybe they belonged to the fairies too. Anyhow I was so hungry I ate one, and that was so good I ate some more. They filled me up till I wanted to sit down and go to sleep. But over by the apple tree was a place like an old road all grown up with weeds and grass. I walked up a little ways and the road turned. There in front of me was an old ruined house with the roof all fallen in and by it a pear tree, another apple tree, an old well, and all around the edges thick tangled bushes full of big blackberries.

I was pretty full with apples already, but I ate a pear. It tasted like wood, and I had to eat some blackberries to get that taste out. They were good and juicy, but all little seeds got stuck in my teeth; so I had to go and get another apple to eat to clean my teeth off with. Then I was so full up I couldn't walk and my stomach was all stuffed out.

## *THE EARLY ADVENTURES*

I lay down under the pear tree which had a thick branch that spread out and kept the sun off me. All around was a buzz and whisper of things talking about me in low faint voices. The bees flew over my head and looked in my face. The grasshoppers crawled up on my jacket and looked and the ants even came up on my face to look and tickled too, but I knew they were all only getting acquainted; so I never said a word but just held still and watched them. My eyes shut down, and I pried them up. Then they shut down hard and I knew for sure I was going off to sleep. . . .

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

THOSE apples must have been magic apples that really belonged to the fairies after all, for I slept nearly the whole day, and when I woke up the sun was sending long shadows across the grass and the ground was cool.

All round me things were talking. Up in the pear tree just over my head two brown birds were speaking about me. Their talk was what woke me up.

One said, "He'll never get home! He'll never get home! He'll never get home — again!"

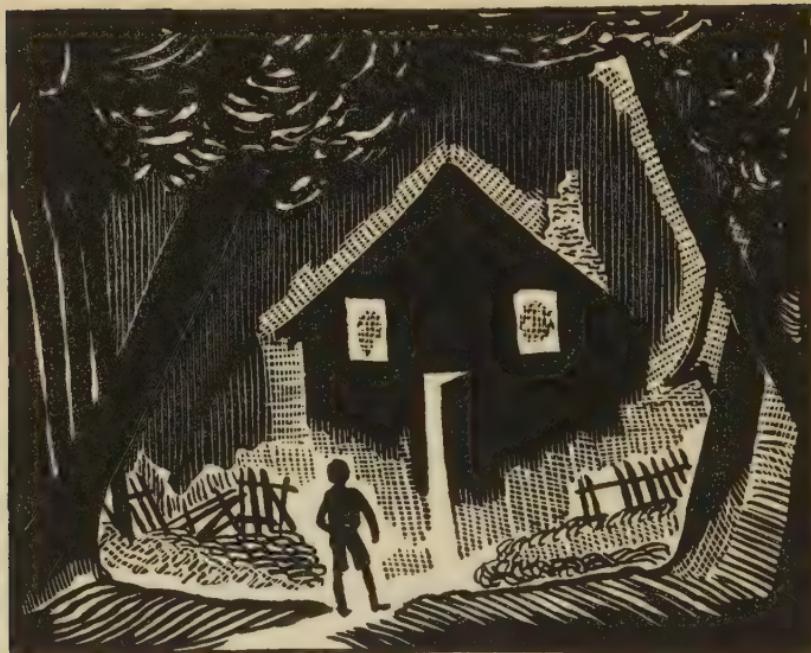
The other one said, "He ought to wake up! he ought to wake up!"

And then way up on the tree top a third one said, scared like, "There — there — there's d-d-d-danger here! There's d-d-danger here!"

That scared me; so I sat up, and the birds flew away.

I was hungry again. There were a few apples by me on the ground, but I didn't seem to want to eat apples any more. All the same I did eat two, but I still felt empty and my stomach burned me. I got up some water from the well. It was full of wiggly things, but I drank around them. Only one

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES



ever got down. My stomach must have burnt him too, for he never grew into anything afterwards.

Then mosquitoes came and bit me all over the backs of my fingers and my legs. I sat on a stone and itched and itched until the sun went down. I got lonesome and scared, and I maybe cried, because it squeezed my stomach to be all alone there in the dark. There was a big moon came up behind the trees and there were white clouds in front of it. They made the moon run. And then they covered it and the whole world grew so dark that I couldn't

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

see anything except the lightning bugs, and the old house very black with black empty eyes. I put my back against the pear tree, and maybe I cried some more. Nothing happened for a while, only more mosquitoes came, and things crawled in my clothes and made me itch all over.

Then it got darker even than before and colder, and all of a sudden, out of the old house came a noise like finger nails scraping on the wall. Then I heard something like a lady's dress switching,—like a lot of ladies in silk dresses walking around in the old black house. All at once a dreadful rattling noise came out of the house, and it felt like a big spider crawling over my back. It started low and faint like a frog, and it climbed up louder and louder and more and more dreadful like a giant was shaking the old house to pieces and all its bones rattling apart, then it cut off sharp, like with scissors, and a terrible long silence came and out of the silence something crept swishing towards me over the moss.

I got up and ran toward where the trees were. While I ran the moon came out again but I was afraid to go back. I kept moving in among the trees. They were black and things touched my face, kind things and rough things that hated me and scratched at my eyes. The ground was hard on my feet.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

Once I stepped in water. The water was icy cold. It must have been a little stream, for I heard a sweet low voice come out of it that said, "Don't be afraid! I've lived here a long while. I'm not afraid."

And then there was a bird talked to me and said, "I'm here too, all night long. I'm here too, all night long."

The stream said some more, "We're not afraid. Don't you be afraid."

Then I saw how the fireflies flew around and lighted up little circles in the dark. They weren't afraid neither, but played up and down through the trees. And I remembered that one night I was the King of the Wind.

I felt better then, for Nothing hadn't hurt me. It was only where houses were that things might hurt people. I walked on slower now, feeling with my feet. Pretty soon it felt smooth for a ways with nothing sharp at all. I stooped down and felt it. The smooth ran on in a narrow line. Maybe it was a path. I walked along the smooth place. It climbed up a hill, and then I could see the moon again, and the trees got thinner and thinner and at last, way up in front of me I saw a fairy palace on top of the hill with maybe a hundred windows and lights and lace curtains. Seemed like I heard a lady singing.

## OF PEACHAM GREW



I went on up the path, but I was looking at the palace on the hill. My foot tripped over a stump, and I fell down on some old boughs that cracked like fireworks. Then nobody was singing. I walked up the path some more. I could see it was a path now. At the very top of the hill the path turned in between two round bushes and when I came out through them, there right in front of me was a beautiful tall lady with a pale face and one of her hands pressed up against her side.

I looked at her for a long time and didn't dare

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

say a word. I just stood there looking up into her face. Once I saw her I never looked at the palace any more, but only at the lady. She was so beautiful I knew she must be a fairy or a princess.

Her hand came down from her side and she whispered, "What are you?"

When I talked back it was only a whisper too, though I went to talk louder. I said "I am Peacham Grew. I came out of the woods." Then I asked her, "Are you a princess or a fairy?"

Then she said, "Out of my woods?"

I answered, "Are all these your woods, where the little river said, 'Don't be afraid!' and where there's an old house with the roof stepped on where noises are, and the three brown birds talked on a tree, and there's a garden with green umbrellas that the fairies meet under in the rain?"

She said, "Yes, it's all mine from here to never. But who are you?" she asked, "Are you enchanted or in your natural form?"

"One time I was King of the Wind." I told her, "But now I'm only Peacham Grew. And my father died, and I stole Uncle Givin's wooden arm and ran away."

She came tip toe toward me. She reached out her hand and touched my shoulder. I thought

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

maybe it was a spell being put on me. Her hand pressed hard on my shoulder and then grabbed hold of my arm and squeezed it tight. I wasn't afraid any more after she touched me. So I said, "Is that your palace?"

She looked around at it and nodded her head, yes.

"Are you a fairy queen, or a real princess?" I asked her.

She looked in my eyes. The moon was on her face and I could see a good smile come on her mouth. Then she said,

"Not a real princess, anyway, King of the Wind."

"You would have to be bigger than the other fairies, wouldn't you?" I asked her, and my voice went into a whisper again, for I was afraid again. Not afraid of her, but just afraid.

She never answered that.

"Are you lost?" she said.

I nodded my head.

"Have you been out there all alone in the dark?"

I nodded again.

"How long?"

"Since the sun came up."

"Are you cold?"

"A little bit."

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

“Hungry? ”

“Only my stomach burns,” I said, “I ate some of,—of your fairies’ apples. A whole lot of them down by the old house where noises are.”

She never got angry when I told her that, but just said, “Is that all you had to eat? ”

“A wooden pear and some blackberries.”

She took my hand and led me up the path to the palace door and up the steps where all the light streamed down through a tall double door. Then the door opened, like by magic to let us in. Behind the door was a black slave, a tall black slave maybe a Giour in a purple suit like a boy’s with short pants and a long coat with silver brade and buttons. When we came in he never moved his face, but his eyes looked down on me very wide and terrible with white edges all around the dark part. The lady looked at him and he closed the door and made his eyes little again.

There was a great wide hall that went back almost like it was a mile, and at the end a wide stairs. All around the walls were looking glasses and shiny gold things, and the floor was like a brown glass that was cold and slippery on my bare feet. All the lights and the chairs were upside down in the floor, like it was a looking glass too. And it was warm

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

in the palace — warm all over, only the floors were cold.

The fairy lady touched something on the wall, and in a minute a lady slave came out of a door. She had on a purple dress too with a white apron and a little white thing on her head with edges like a crown. The fairy lady said some words in fairy talk and the slave went away.

Then the fairy took my hand again and led me into a door. There was a room there bigger than I ever saw before. The ceiling went way up as high as trees with paintings of fairies flying like angles, and in the middle there hung down a terrible bright light all magicked around with big diamonds like a million stars. The pictures all had frames of gold, and some of the chairs were gold with paintings on their back. The piano was a flat piano like a table with gold pictures over its sides.

All the time the lady looked at my face and smiled. Sometimes I looked at her face and tried to smile too. I could see her face better in here. She was beautifuller than anybody except my mother, and it looked like very young, but her hair was snow white, which I never knew about fairies before. Her eyes were blue like violets.

She said to sit down, but I was afraid to sit down

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

on the gold chairs. All the same she made me, and then she played some music that made a noise like the little river and said, "Don't be afraid! Don't be afraid!" At the end the music got soft and sleepy like wind in the trees and died away so sad and mournful that maybe I cried.

Then the lady slave opened a door way across the room, and the Fairy took my hand and led me through to a little room where there was a table with a white table cloth, and on it all the things of silver, — all the dishes of silver like Alladin ate out of that the Geni brought. Bread was in a silver dish and butter in a dish like a big flower of glass and gold.

The lady said something in fairy talk which sent the lady slave away, but she looked hard at me when she passed by.

There was a pitcher of cool milk. The lady poured a teaspoonful of something out of a flat bottle into the pitcher and then made me drink some of the milk. She and I got friends together. She even ate something too, for company. She was such a good Fairy that I told her about Father and Margry, and even about the fern seed and Borlacks. I knew she'd understand about magic things and she did. She liked about Borlacks best. Once even, seemed like she cried a little about all the long time poor

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

Borlacks had to wait up in the little room. She seemed all the time more like a real lady than a fairy. I drank some more milk. It was cold in my mouth but it was warm in my stomach.

I said, "I never knew even fairies are so good as you."

And then the Fairy leaned over and kissed me on the face.

"Are you anybody's fairy godmother?" I asked her then.

She shook her head, no.

"Will you be mine?" I asked her.

Then she nodded her head yes, and sort of huddled me up and made me put my head down on her shoulder like a pillow.

Once afterwards she kissed me again, for I got so sleepy pretty soon, I couldn't talk any more and all I remember is that the tall slave lifted me in his arms and carried me up the shiny stairs. And I remember that the Fairy washed off my face and hands herself and undressed me, and there was a good smell like pressed flowers all around. It was then she kissed me, just before I went off to sleep.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

WHEN I woke up the sweet smell of pressed flowers was still all around me. The bed was so soft, like I was sleeping on a warm cloud, that I wondered why I woke up so soon. It was still grey and dim in the big room, and way up above me the ceiling seemed as far off as the sky. I felt strange and scared a little when I knew where I was. For I had slept all night in the palace of the Queen of the Fairies and she had kissed me on my mouth. She was good, but the slaves had looked strange at me, and maybe they weren't so good.

Then I remembered all about Uncle Givin and his arm, and how Mother must have come last night and found me gone. I was sorry then how I had run away. I thought I must go back to Mother, even if Uncle Givin has to give me a switching. I must go back quick, for I must never make her cry.

Then I thought, maybe the queen of the fairies is going to keep me here forever. I remembered how when she wanted me to drink more milk she had said, "You are my slave now, Peacham. You must do as I say." All the time I was sure she was a good lady, but it made me afraid. I loved her

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

but she made me afraid. There was so much gold and diamonds here, and even the way she smiled was all so strange.

I lay thinking a while, wondering and wondering what to do. Then all of a sudden I knew why I had waked up so early, for across the room I heard a noise, and then I remembered it was the noise I had heard in my sleep. Something was tapping and tapping gently, and then all at once very loud like hammering on a piece of tin. I was scared, but I looked and saw that way across the room where the dim light came in there was a queer tall thing all over dull gold with little slats that run up and down, a tall gold chest, all magic and strange.

The noise came out of the chest. Tap, tap, tap, and bang, bang, bang, like something cooped up inside trying to find a way out. Then I knew what it was. Then I remembered and I was terribly afraid. I remembered how the fisherman had thrown his net into the river Tigress and brought up a bottle with a seal on its cork and something cooped up inside, and all the talk and magic that came afterwards.

I hid my head under the covers where the smell was so sweet, but still it talked and called to me and tapped and rattled inside, cooped up there forever.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

I thought and thought and thought. I remembered old stories. I thought, supposing this beautiful lady gets people in here for slaves and coops them up forever? All the ladies that do that are beautiful and kind until somebody drinks something they give him. All of a sudden I thought how she had made me drink that milk out of the silver pitcher, how she had poured something into it out of the little flat bottle, and how I drank it and went to sleep. "You are my slave now," the lady said. I hated to think bad things about her, but it was all so like the books. Besides she had kissed me, and always that was the way.

I got up and found my clothes. All the time the Thing kept tapping while I dressed myself. At last I was done. I tiptoed over to it. There was more light now. It was a tall thing. I touched it. Up top it was cold. Down at the bottom where the Thing was tapping it was warm like something alive inside, and up near the top on the side away from the window was a bright thing with a round top and marks on it. I knew this was the seal like the seal that King Solomon put on the Geni in the bottle.

I touched the gold chest again and the Thing inside tapped. Then I said, "Who are you? Are you a Geni?"

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

But the Thing inside never said a word.

Then I asked, "Are you, maybe a little boy that the Fairy has put in here to be a slave?"

Then the Thing tapped very loud to answer me and I knew it meant to say, yes.

I asked it, "Is the beautiful lady a bad lady that makes people slaves? Is she a bad fairy?"

It tapped again very loud right by my face.

Then I said, "Shall I let you out?"

This time it rattled hard and hissed a little bit over by the seal, like trying to say, yes. I could feel the warm coming up as it crawled up to where I talked.

"Will you be good to me and not hurt me? Do you promise if I let you out?" I said.

It tapped very softly and said, yes.

"Cross your heart?" I said.

It tapped again and I could hear it moving around inside like purtending to cross its heart.

I was afraid, but all the same I pulled at the seal, and twisted at it. It turned around. I twisted some more and in a minute it came off in my hand. There was a little round black hole there. Then something began to hiss like a spicket that's not quite turned off, and out of the hole just like the Geni in the story there came a puff of grey smoke.

THE EARLY ADVENTURES



I ran back toward my bed. The smoke came thicker and thicker.

It rose up to the ceiling. The hissing noise got loud and angry. The smoke got white and just gushed out of the little hole. It smelled hot like a wash tub and came down after me.

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

Then all of a sudden I knew that it was bad, that I had let a bad thing out in the beautiful lady's house, a bad thing that might even kill the lady, for now all around the room up to the ceiling came the terrible hot white smoke. It chased me across the bed toward the window where the air blew it back.

I picked up a pillow and threw it up at the smoke, but the smoke ran right around the pillow and came rushing down toward me. Only the pillow hit something that fell down with a hard noise and I heard some one running outside my door.

The white smoke came rushing down around me and I was afraid it would get me in its arms. I leaned out of the window. The ground was far below, but there was a tall bush right under me and I jumped into the bush and tumbled down through its branches to the ground.

When I got all right again I looked up. The white smoke was pouring out of the window after me. I heard the lady's voice, but I was afraid of the smoke and I was ashamed that I had let this thing out in her house and had thought for a while she was a bad lady. I turned and ran along the walls.

It was the back of the palace. There were woods close up to it. I made for the woods, and in a

## *THE EARLY ADVENTURES*

minute I was deep in among the trees. I could hear sounds, and I thought once the lady's voice calling behind me, but the palace was out of sight now, and pretty soon the only noises I could hear were the birds up on the treetops singing to the sun.

*OF PEACHAM GREW*

HERE were paths through these woods, and it was cleared away under the trees. I got a drink from a little spring and walked on and on, but my leg hurt from where I fell down through the tree and my feet were sore from all the sharp things I had trepped on. I sat down and rested everytime I found a stump or a smooth stone. Then I could watch all around me how the sunlight came down through the leaves and there were pale flowers that held up their long thin necks to the sun. Once I saw a white flower like a ghost flower that held its head down to the ground like a pipe upside down as though it grew up and changed its mind and wanted the dark ground more than the sun.

Another time when I sat down there was an old ruined house near where I sat, worse ruined than the one I saw before, because that still had some of its lid left, but this was all dead and gone, only a chimney and some stones. Then I thought, houses are realler than people are, for when a house dies there's all its body left here forever, but when people die they're all gone forever and nothing to tell they were ever here. That made me sad. It made

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES



me think of Father and Borlacks. And I wanted to get home to Mother to sit by her and talk. I think I cried maybe then, but not very long, for I heard people's voices calling through the trees. Seemed like the lady's voice and then a colored man's voice calling my name. I thought they were coming after me because I let that Thing out in the house, but my feet hurt too bad to run.

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

There was a big old tree right by the stone I sat on. The leaves were thick and there were lots of branches, low down and spreading all around. I reached up and climbed and climbed until I found a place where three branches ran together and made a seat almost like a chair with the leaves thick down under and up above a few green boughs between me and the tall blue ceiling of the sky.

I was tired and hungry. My stomach didn't burn any longer but I felt empty even up into my brains. I pulled a little branch full of leaves and leaned back on it. The tree moved slowly back and forth like a ship. It seemed like I was sailing through the sky. Then I heard people coming down the hill, the lady's voice speaking in strange fairy talk and the lady slave answering. They went by and every now and then I heard them call my name. There was a nest near where I sat. I was sure it must be empty it was so near to the fall, and all the birds hatched and gone away, but every now and then I noticed two little rents calling over my head and saying, "Go away! You scare us. Go away!"

I crept over and looked into the nest, and there were three little red mouths in there open wide. They were little rents. They were hungry like me. The mother bird came down with a worm in her

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

mouth, but she was afraid to go in the nest, and the father ren, I guess it was flew over my head and called to me, "Go away! You scare us. Go away!"

I was sorry for the little hungry birds that I was keeping from getting their dinner. But I waited until the lady came back and went up the hill again still calling my name. Then I climbed down the tree, and before I even got out of sight the mother bird flew into her nest and fed her little children.

All day I stayed in the woods. I wanted to get back home to Mother, but I didn't know now which way it was. I felt queer and my feet hurt more and more whenever I walked. My leg made me limp. So I never got very far from that big tree.

There was a spring to drink from. I found some blueberries in a patch of rocks and ate them, but all the time I got emptier and emptier and my head felt like it was lifting me up. There came a narrow green snake and played with me a while, but all the time he never said a word. I made a house for him out of sticks, but he wouldn't live in it, and when I told him how nice it was and how warm and pushed his head in through the door, he got mad at me and slid away for good.

After a long time, dark came with stars all over

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

the sky. I sat down on the smooth stone under my big tree. I was so hungry now that all I could think of was things to eat, — potatoes and gravy, and donuts and sardines and bread and butter.

Then a cloud came over the stars like the sky was swept over by a rough broom that combed it like hair and the moon came up through that cloud.

I felt in my pocket, for maybe there were some crumbs left from one time I had some cookies in the pocket. There were a few with dirt in them and three matches I had left from when I burnt the arm. I scraped around and found some dry leaves and the house I made for the green snake and some other sticks. I lighted the leaves but they blazed up and went out. Then the dark was a hundred times darker than before. But I got some more leaves and some thinner sticks and this time the fire lighted and the little house began to burn so I could see all around. The shadows were black and wavy like things hiding away in the trees, but the fire felt warm and good. I got a big pile of wood and sat on my stone and kept putting things on the fire. The sleep got in my eyes, but I was afraid to sleep now for then the fire would go out and the dark would be so dark.

All the same I did, for when I opened my eyes the

## *THE ADVENTURES OF PEACHAM GREW*

fire was almost out. I bent over quick to put some more sticks on, and as I bent over I heard a low voice come out of the shadows.

It said, "Don't be afraid, Peacham. Don't be scared!"

But I went stiff all over. Then some twigs cracked and through the dark Borlacks came walking toward me reaching out his hands.



I HEARD A LOW VOICE COME OUT  
OF THE SHADOWS



## THE ADVENTURES OF PEACHAM GREW

**F**OR a while I was so glad that I couldn't talk. All that time he stood, looking hard into my eyes. Then I got afraid that it was only a dream. I called out his name and he came over and took hold of my hands.

“I had to go away without ever saying, goodbye.” I told him.

“I saw you from the window,” said Borlacks, “I knew why.” He looked at me very deep in my eyes and smiled. His face was brown and sunburnt. He looked stronger and happier than he ever was before, but he looked strange too, for his eyes seemed far away, even when he looked so hard into my face.

“I left the same day you did.” He said. “I couldn't stay any longer. I —” Then he stopped what he was saying and asked me, “Are you hungry?”

I nodded my head, yes.

Then he put his arm around me and comforted me like I used to comfort him.

“I ran away,” I said, “I been lost.”

“I know,” said Borlacks, “You told that lady up on the hill.”

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

“The fairy lady?”

He looked sharp at me and then nodded his head.

“I was up a tree talking to a bird,” he said, “I saw you go in the house. Then all the time you told her things I listened outside. After that I had to go way all day. When I got back there were people calling your name; so I knew you were somewhere here. After the dark came I saw your fire.”

“I been a long time alone.” I said, “But I feel all right now, only hungry and my head hurts a bit.”

“Could you eat apples?” he asked. I wished it had been something else, but I nodded my head, yes. Then he ran off into the dark and came back in a little while with three big yellow apples.

“There’s a tree back here, not very far away. It was an orchard once. I know everything in these woods,” said Borlacks, “I’ve been here a long time.”

“But the woods run all the way over to Uncle Givin’s,” I said, “Where I live.”

“I know. I used to see you there every day. You came out and sat under a maple tree and wrote things on paper.”

“And you never gave me a call?”

“I wasn’t allowed,” said Borlacks, “Not any more. Because you’re a little boy that’s got to grow up and be a man pretty soon, and I’m only Borlacks,

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

that can't never grow any more. I thought it was all right, back home, and it was then, he says. But not now, or you'd never grow up, but stay a little boy all the time."

"Oh Borlacks," I said, "I don't want to grow up. I want to stay being a little boy. I want you always to play with me and be friends."

"We're always bound to be friends," he said, "But you got to grow up. He says so. You got to grow up and look after your mother."

I never thought about that much, but now when I did I knew I wanted to grow up and look after her. Only I wanted not to lose Borlacks either.

"I learned a lot since I saw you," he told me. "I came here to be close to where you were. Sometimes in the night I came out of the woods and sat a little while under your maple tree and watched the light up at your window."

"Did you ever sing to me?" I asked.

"No," said Borlacks, "I can't sing. But I wanted so to come in to see you and talk. But he said, I mustn't ever, only if there was danger and I could help you, or I wouldn't have dared to come now. For people must live with people, he says and all the other folks must live by themselves. Only he showed me the way to come here;

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

so we could look up at your window. It wouldn't hurt, he said, unless you knew."

"Who did?" I asked him, but he wouldn't answer that, and we sat down awhile till I ate the three apples. The apples filled up my stomach and my head, but all time I ate them I was feeling very sad and thinking about the old times.

The fire had burned down now to only a lot of red coals, but there was a faint light of the moon edged down through the trees.

"I came here to be close though," said Borlacks at last, like he could see how sad I was. "So you know I love you all the same. More than anybody that ever was I love you, except now maybe I love him just like I love you."

"Who, Borlacks?" I asked him again.

He looked at me and smiled, and then he raised his head and whistled a low song like a bird half asleep. He took hold of my hand and whispered, "He's my friend."

The leaves stirred like soft feet were walking over them, and the moon shone down on something tall and pale moving through the trees. I held my breath and waited with Borlacks squeezing tight on my hand.

It came toward us, out where the moonlight fell.

*OF PEACHAM GREW*

And then I let go Borlacks' hand and ran toward it with my arms wide out, and I saw my father's head bend over me and I felt his arms come tight around my neck and under me, as he lifted me and carried me back to the fire.

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

I HUGGED and hugged him around the neck, and I cried tears on his face. Then I looked at him, and then I hid my face on his shoulder again and cried some more. All the time he petted me with his hands and held me hard. And all the time I told him how I loved him, and how sorry I was he had gone away. At last he held me away from him and looked at me hard and smiled.

“The same old Peachey,” he said, “But this isn’t the same old Dad. Look how well I am,” he said, “And I never cough any more.”

Then he asked me all about everything, and I told him.

But when I told him about Mother working in town and things she said, it made him sad.

“Too much fern seed, old boy,” he said, “Too much. Just a little is right in this old world. Only if it hadn’t been for the fern seed I could never be here with you, and never have this little pal here to look after and boss around.”

Then he put his arm around Borlacks too.

“We two are the best friends,” said Father. “And you don’t mind a bit? ”

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

“Mind?” I said, “Oh but I’m glad that he has you and you have him. So glad, Dad.”

“I’ve adopted him,” said Father, “Pretty soon we’ll be off together, Borlacks and I. Way off, further than the moon.”

“You see,” said Borlacks, “Now I’m going to get in all right. I’m going in with him.”

I began to cry again, for I knew that he meant that he was going away for ever.

“I don’t think,” said Father, “There was ever a little boy just like you, that makes even a fellow like me come real when he’s around. It’s more than fern seed. But you’ve got to grow up, old man, and be a strong big fellow that sees the real world all the time, and only just remembers all the rest. For Mother’s sake.”

“I know, Dad,” I said, “I know.” And then I cried harder than ever before, and he comforted me in his arms.

“I’d love to keep you here all night,” said Father after a while. “Couldn’t we have the times together, we three?”

“Can’t we please?” asked Borlacks. “There’s the singing woods we could take him to, and the caves of gold; and the place where all the people live that get born in books,— where Tom Sawyer

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

is and Aladdin is and Jim Hawkins that went to Treasure Island, and old Robinson Crusoe that the others stand around to listen to when he talks; and there's — ”

But Father wouldn't let him say any more.

“ He's got to grow up to be a man, Borlacks, and somewhere waiting over yonder is the dearest lady in the world grieving her heart away because her boy is gone. He's got to be a fighting character, eh Peacham, for her. And there are some things a fighting character daren't think about too soon. Wouldn't I have liked to be the one to fight along! But that's over now and you're the one, old man. Only remember this, that the big times will be coming some day for you and me and her when we can make all the dreams come true, but now it's the fighting character,” said Father, and all of a sudden picked me up and squished me hard against him.

Then without saying another word he walked off through the trees holding me tight in his arms, with Borlacks following close behind us: straight off through the trees, some places so black that it seemed like the sky was all around us without any stars but the shooting stars of the fireflies, and sometimes the real stars too up top of us, all scrambled around through the dark.

*OF PEACHAM GREW*



I felt as though I was back home in our old house being carried up to bed. It was so like those times that I couldn't believe anything terrible had happened, but when Father had walked on some more

## THE EARLY ADVENTURES

we passed over the little river that sang, and then I heard a voice calling me way off somewhere and I woke up like out of a dream. When he heard the voice Father ran with me, and the stars went by over us quick and bright that I could see his hair dancing in the wind.

Then very close I heard my mother's voice calling and calling my name; calling and calling, but tired and sad, and always nothing but my name. Father put me down on the ground and kissed me very hard on my mouth, and Borlacks kissed me, but neither one said Good Bye. All the same I knew they meant Good Bye, and even when Mother called again I wouldn't go.

Father took my hand, and this time I felt his own hand shake while he led me. Then he stopped as though he was afraid, but I held hard on to his hand until he started on again with a low crying sound coming from his mouth.

Borlacks was gone.

“Call her! ” said my father. His voice was like a whisper that trembled. He tried to draw his hand away. I held on hard though and called out loud as I could, “Mother! Mother! ”

I heard Mother's feet coming through the woods. Father's hand shook so that I could hardly hold it.

## *OF PEACHAM GREW*

I saw Mother's shadow coming through the trees and I said, "Mother, our Dad is here."

Mother gave a terrible strange cry and called out my name, as she rushed toward us. Then Father's hand pulled away from me, but for a second, like in the old days he ran his fingers through my hair and rubbed it around. I looked behind me to see him again, but when I looked he was gone and Mother and I were alone among the trees.

THIS IS  
THE END  
OF  
MY FIRST ADVENTURES,  
BY  
PEACHAM GREW.







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